



Wasatch Stake Tabernacle



1. TABERNACLE — Historic Site — National Register

On May 4, 1889, the newly-born *Wasatch Wave* exuberantly reported: "The Stake House is finished and cleaned in beautiful style ready for dedication tomorrow. Conference visitors are expected to clean their feet before entering the building and leave their knives and pencils and tobacco at home." It was an especially happy occasion for Abram Hatch, the Stake President, who had initiated the idea for the new Stake House, and who had meticulously superintended its construction every step of the way since ground was broken in 1887. With justification, he felt that it was the finest church building in all of Utah.

The entire project was built with donated labor and materials. The red sandstone was quarried by hand from the mountains east of Heber City near Lake Creek, and hauled to the site by church members who furnished their own teams. With no railroad into the Valley, there were many problems in connection with transporting all the necessary materials to the construction site. Alex Fortie was the supervising "architect," according to the records, and he directed all carpentry work; Elisha Averett was in charge of masonry work; Francis Kirby supervised the painting; Frederick O. Buell managed the cutting and laying of the sheet metal shingles. They are but a few of the many people who worked to erect the Valley's largest and finest building — the people whose names were reported in the newspaper — but of course, there were hundreds of others who "helped." Historian Edward W. Tullidge, duly impressed with the edifice as it neared completion, preserved this information: "The building is 50x95 feet...thirty feet in

height to the square. It is built on a heavy foundation, which is five feet wide at the bottom, and tapers upward to three feet at the top. The walls are two feet thick...covered with a self-supporting wood and iron roof. The tower is built of rock and extends about ten feet above the ridge of the roof. From this point, the tower will be completed in red wood and metal extending about twenty-five feet, making it in all about ninety feet high to the top of the weather vane. The tower is fourteen feet square...the walls of the building are strengthened by buttresses on the sides, front and rear...Galleries are erected on each side and end. The capacity is 1,500..."

The good people of Heber City, so many of whom had toiled and sacrificed to build it, quite naturally took special pains to furnish and maintain their beautiful new Stake House. The floors were scrubbed and bleached with homemade soap; homemade carpets were carefully laid down the aisles; coal oil lamps hanging from the ceiling furnished light. (Excerpt from article by John James) Cost of the building was more than \$30,000. Francis M. Lyman, of the Council of The Twelve, dedicated the building. Thirteen hundred persons were present.

From the diary of Elizabeth Lindsay comes the following description of the building's heating system: "The four big 'pot bellied' stoves were very important. Uncle Jessie Bond, the janitor for 30 years, went religiously from one to the other stirring them noisily and replenishing the coal and then would disappear into the back room to see about the fire there. If the stirrings came in the middle of a solo or at the climax of a great sermon, it made no difference."

The bell was rung each Sunday morning at 9:30 to remind the Saints of Sunday School and again at 1:30 p.m. to remind them of Sacrament meeting. The bell was also used as a fire alarm or for any other important circumstance that warranted a gathering of the people. For funerals, the bell was very slowly tolled as the cortege approached the Stake House. (Source: How Beautiful Upon The Mountains)

In 1964, it was announced that the Tabernacle and Social Hall to the west would be razed to make room for a new Stake Center. Those who loved the grand old building felt rage and sorrow. A group of citizens seeking to save the Tabernacle presented a petition of 1,366 signatures to the First Presidency of the L.D.S. Church. The church finance committee voted that the building not be kept as a Stake Tabernacle, but decided that if the Wasatch group could procure property for a new Stake Center, the church would turn the old building over to responsible persons. Hopes ran high and the real work began.

From *The Wasatch Wave* Oct. 8, 1964: "Church leadership has now approved an alternate site for the new 2nd-5th Ward Stake Center. \$60,000 will be needed for site acquisition." The Save The Tabernacle Fund Drive began in real earnest. Finally on July 5, 1965, the following statement was issued in *The Salt Lake Tribune*: "Hugh B. Brown, First Counselor in the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced Sunday night at a special Priesthood meeting of the Heber Wasatch Stake that the old Stake Tabernacle would be preserved. A new Center will be built at an alternate site. President Brown said about 300 Priesthood members were in attendance and they all sustained President David O. McKay's decision, delivered by President Brown. This final decision came after a year's effort on the part of many individuals of the community as well as neighboring areas to preserve the historic structure." (end

HEBER CITY CENTENNIAL 1889 - 1989



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